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THE TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN THE SOUTH.

BY REED SMITH.

IN tabulating American survivals of the traditional English and Scottish popular ballads, uniformity in the use of terms is desirable. As Professor Kittredge pointed out in a letter to the writer, the terms "ballad found in America," and "version," need settling. Ballad-collectors since Child include under "ballad found in America" all ballads derived from singers and reciters living in the United States, no matter what the original nationality of the reciters or singers. This is a proper use of the term, if ballad-collectors unite in so using it, and if the same principle is followed in quoting statistics as to American survivals listed in Child's "English and Scottish Popular Ballads" and in Child's ballad manuscripts.¹

Agreement on the exact meaning of the term "version" is likewise needed. Ballad-collectors at present seem to be using "version" in the sense of "variant copy," and are calling each ballad copy or text a "version." This use of the word would be unobjectionable, if it were agreed upon by all, and if it could be applied in quoting statistics and making references to Child's collections. There, however, the term "version" has another content, meaning "a copy with distinguishing characteristics in plot, style, age, atmosphere, or the like;" and a single "version" is often represented by several variants. Thus, Child's "version B" of No. 4 includes four variants (*a-d*), and his "version I" of No. 12 includes nine (*a-i*). Ambiguity, therefore, results when "version" is used both in this stricter sense and in the broader, looser sense of "copy or variant." Since all ballad collecting and investigation must go back ultimately to Child's final and authoritative work, it would seem preferable to use "version" as he uses it, and to employ "variant" to mean loosely any copy (or fragment) of a ballad secured on American soil, irrespective of the particular "version" in Child to which the copy seems to point.

In the following tabulation of American ballad-findings, "variant" is so used, "version" being reserved for the stricter meaning as employed in Child.

¹ These manuscripts belong to the Harvard College Library, and are at present in the custody of Professor Kittredge, who has nearly completed their arrangement and cataloguing.

I. THE TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN AMERICA.

A. AMERICAN VARIANTS IN CHILD'S ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS.¹

In Child's "English and Scottish Popular Ballads" there are included from America 27 ballads in 55 variants. These are distributed as follows:—

Source.	No. in Child.	No. of Variants.
Massachusetts	2	1
Virginia	4	1
New York	10	2
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i> ²)	11	1
Massachusetts	12	6
Maine	12	2
New Hampshire	12	2
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	20	1
<i>Dr. Thomas Davidson</i> ³	20	1
Massachusetts	49	1
New York	49	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	62	1
<i>Davidson</i>	62	1
Massachusetts	73	3
Virginia	73	1
Massachusetts	74	1
Massachusetts	75	1
Virginia	76	1
North Carolina	76	1
Michigan	76	1
North Carolina	79	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	81	1
North Carolina	93	1
Virginia	93	1
Massachusetts	93	1
North Carolina	95	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	96	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i> ⁴)	105	1
<i>Davidson</i>	110	1
Pennsylvania	155	2

¹ The information as to Child's English and Scottish Popular Ballads and as to the Child manuscripts was furnished through the courtesy of Professor Kittredge.

² This ballad is described by Child as being "from Miss Margaret Reburn, as current in County Meath, Ireland, about 1860." In the Advertisement (or preface) to Part I, Child gives Miss Reburn's residence as New Albion, Io. "Among Child's papers," says Professor Kittredge, "are many letters from her." Hereafter ballad-texts which were submitted by her will be marked *Reburn*.

³ Dr. Thomas Davidson was a Scot who lived for many years in various parts of the United States (in Missouri, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey). It is hence impossible to tell to what States to accredit his texts. Hereafter they will be marked *Davidson*.

⁴ Mentioned by Child (II, 426), as "from an Irish lady."

Source.	No. in Child.	No. of Variants.
Maryland	155	I
New York	155	I
Massachusetts	188	I
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	200	I
Massachusetts	200	I
Maine	200	I
New York	200	2
<i>Davidson</i>	219	I
—	243	I ¹
New Hampshire	250	I
South Carolina	250	I
<i>Davidson</i>	252 ²	I
Massachusetts	277	I

B. AMERICAN VARIANTS IN THE CHILD MANUSCRIPTS, HARVARD
COLLEGE LIBRARY.³

Concerning these manuscripts, Professor Kittredge writes, "Child also had (in whole or in part) the following ballads, which he preserved in manuscript, but did not use in his book, either because he thought them derived from print, suspected their genuineness, or for other causes. They should be included in the statistics, however; for many of the texts recently collected, if Child had examined them, would have been similarly judged by him." To put it the other way around, the ballads about to be listed would have been included, according to the method of later ballad-collectors. It seems best, therefore, to include them in the Child statistics of American survivals. There are 20 such ballads in 26 variants, as follows:—

Source.	No. in Child.	No. of Variants.
Texas	2	I
Massachusetts	4	2
New York	4	I
Massachusetts	10	I
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	39	I
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	53	I
Massachusetts	62	I
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	65	I
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	68	I
North Carolina	73	I
Massachusetts	75	4
New Hampshire	75	I
Texas	79	I

¹ Two stanzas of "an Americanized version . . . printed not long ago in Philadelphia."
"I have been able to secure only two stanzas, which were cited in Graham's Illustrated Magazine, September, 1888" (Child, IV, 361).

² Printed as a fragment of No. 17 (Child, I, 502), but subsequently noted as belonging to No. 252 (Child, IV, 451).

³ See note 1, p. 55.

Source.	No. in Child.	No. of Variants.
<i>Davidson</i>	83	1
Kentucky	85	1
<i>Davidson</i>	93	1
Virginia	125	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	156	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	170	1
<i>Davidson</i>	173	1
Iowa (<i>Reburn</i>)	178	1
Virginia	243	1

Combining both lists we have a total of 38 different ballads: —

2	39	73	83	110	178	252
4	49	74	85	125	188	277
10	53	75	93	155	200	
11	62	76	95	156	219	
12	65	79	96	170	243	
20	68	81	105	173	250	

These 38 ballads exist in 81 variants.

SUMMARY BY STATES.

Source.	Ballads (Child).
Iowa	11, 20, 39, 53, 62, 65, 68, 81, 96, 105, 156, 170, 178, 200.
Maine	12(2), 200.
Maryland	155.
Massachusetts	2, 4(2), 10, 12(6), 49, 62, 73(3), 74, 75(5), 93, 188, 200, 277.
Michigan	76.
New Hampshire	12(2), 75, 250.
New York	4, 10(2), 49, 155, 200(2).
North Carolina	73, 76, 79, 93, 95.
Pennsylvania	155(2), 243.
South Carolina	250.
Texas	2, 79.
Virginia	4, 73, 76, 93, 125, 243.
<i>Davidson</i>	20, 62, 83, 93, 110, 173, 219, 252.

C. AMERICAN VARIANTS REPORTED BY LATER COLLECTORS.

During the last two decades the search for American survivals has been more or less systematically carried on in certain sections, and results of ballad-findings have appeared from time to time in this Journal and elsewhere.

The fullest tabulation of traditional ballads surviving in America is Mr. Barry's list printed by Professor H. M. Belden in his article on "Balladry in America." It contains 52 separate ballads.¹

¹ See this Journal, vol. xxv, p. 5, note 1. This article has been of much assistance to American ballad-collectors. The list consists of the following numbers in Child: —

With this list as a working-basis, during the last few months an effort was made by the writer to complete it, and, so far as possible, to bring it up to date. Most of the leading ballad-collectors in the United States were written to.¹ Mr. Phillips Barry of Cambridge, Mass., was personally consulted,² and rendered valuable assistance.

2	20	53	84	125	210	278
3	26	68	85	155	214	279
4	27	73	93	162	221	281
7	43	74	95	181	243	285
10	45	75	105	188	250	287
12	46	76	106	200	274	289
13	47	79	110	209	277	295
18	49	81				

¹ Generous assistance was given by all who were consulted. Their kindness and co-operation made possible the larger part of this article. Next to Professor Kittredge, thanks are due primarily to Mr. Barry and to the following: Professor H. M. Belden of Missouri, Professor H. G. Shearin of Kentucky, Professor C. Alphonso Smith of Virginia, Professor Frank C. Brown of North Carolina, Professors J. A. Lomax and R. A. Law of Texas, and Miss Louise Pound of Nebraska. The following were also communicated with; and furnished whatever information, either positive or negative, was in their possession: Professor O. D. Wannamaker of Alabama, Professor W. F. Melton of Georgia, Professor Alcée Fortier of Louisiana, Miss Mary L. Dougherty and Professor E. M. Hopkins of Kansas, Miss Mary A. Owen of Missouri, and Professor E. C. Perrow, University of Louisville.

Miss Louise Pound has published an interesting article on "Traditional Ballads in Nebraska" in this Journal, vol. xxvi, pp. 351-366. Seven traditional ballads are included. As stated on p. 351 of her article, "Almost without exception, they were brought from elsewhere, — from Virginia, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana." In a letter of Jan. 10, 1914, Miss Pound kindly listed for me her material in detail as follows: —

Johnny Randall (Lord Randal, Child, 12). Sung in a railway camp in Colorado. See *Modern Language Notes*, January, 1902.

Two Little Boys (The Two Brothers, Child, 45). Brought from Nodaway County, Missouri.

Lord Bayham (Young Beichan, Child, 53). In a MS. book of ballads brought from Indiana.

Lord Lovel (Child, 75). Texts from Virginia; Aledo, Ill.; and Junction, Wyo.

Barbara Allen's Cruelty (Child, 84). Texts from Kearney (Neb.), Indiana, and Nodaway County, Missouri.

Black Jack Daly, or the Gypsy Laddie (Child, 200). Brought from Nodaway County, Missouri.

The House Carpenter (James Harris, or The Demon Lover, Child, 243). Brought to Nebraska from Aledo, Ill.

Miss Pound has been promised a copy of *Sir Hugh and the Jew's Daughter* (Child, 155), coming from Missouri, but has not yet obtained it.

² Mr. Barry has a fine collection of ballad-texts and a particularly rich and varied number of ballad-tunes. His collection covers in the main the North Atlantic States. Pending a fuller description, which it is to be hoped he will soon publish, a summary of his material will be of interest. Numerals in parentheses refer to the number of variants, tunes included: —

2(8)	10(2)	43(1)	68(1)	106(2)	210(1)	273(1)	281(1)	287(2)
3(1)	11(1)	45(1)	73(4)	110(1)	214(1)	274(3)	285(1)	289(2)
4(13)	12(28)	46(1)	75(6)	162(2)	243(4)	279(3)	286(6)	295(1)
7(1)	26(1)	53(4)	84(8)	200(17)	250(2)			

Professor Kittredge, as already noted,¹ drew generously upon his intimate first-hand knowledge both of the Child material in particular and of the whole ballad-field in general. From all these sources, 21 additions were brought to light.

On the information furnished by Professor Kittredge, and tabulated above, were added the following numbers.

11	65	156	178
39	83	170	219
62	96	173	215

From Mr. Barry's collection were reported Nos. 273, 286.²

From Virginia, reported by Professor C. Alphonso Smith, were Nos. 120, 126, 141, 201.

From Missouri, reported by Professor Belden, was No. 185.

From Kentucky, reported by Professor Shearin, was No. 299.

A puzzling question arises here as to whether to include No. 40 in the list of American survivals. No. 27 is given by Professor Arthur Beatty,³ "from Mrs. McLeod of Dumfries, Scotland, when she was on a visit to her relations at Lake Mills, Wis." This seems to be the only variant yet found in the United States. From the same source are reported Nos. 26, 40, and 181. Now, No. 26 has been reported elsewhere (by Mr. Barry and from South Carolina), and may hence be dismissed from discussion. No other American variants, however, of Nos. 40 and 181, have turned up. Professor Belden includes Nos. 27 and 181 in his list, but does not include No. 40. As all three seem to rest upon the same basis, either No. 40 should be added to the completed list, or Nos. 27 and 181 excluded.

If No. 40 is accepted, the present grand total of traditional ballads surviving in America is 73. If No. 40 is excluded, and Nos. 27 and 181 along with it, the total is 70.

The complete list consists of the following:—

2	27(?)	68	95	162	214	281
3	39	73	96	170	219	285
4	40(?)	74	105	173	221	286
7	43	75	106	178	243	287
10	45	76	110	181(?)	250	289
11	46	79	120	185	252	295
12	47	81	125	188	273	299
13	49	83	126	200	274	
18	53	84	141	201	277	
20	62	85	155	209	278	
26	65	93	156	210	279	

¹ See note, p. 55, and note 1, p. 56.

² No. 286, *The Sweet Trinity* (*The Golden Vanity*), was also reported from Missouri and Kentucky.

³ See this *Journal*, vol. xx, p. 154.

II. THE BALLAD IN THE SOUTH.

So far as the ballad is concerned, the South seems to be at present the most promising field in the United States. According to the fullest and most recent information obtainable,¹ 40 separate ballads have been discovered in the six States of Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, Texas, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

From Kentucky are reported 23: —

Child,	4	13	68	76	85	277
	7	20	73	79	105	286
	10	49	74	81	155	299
	12	53	75	84	243	

From Missouri are reported 19: —

Child,	2	18	74	84	209	277	286
	4	49	75	185	243	278	289
	10	73	79	200	250		

From North Carolina are reported 13: —

Child,	4	12	73	75	79	93	243
	7	53	74	76	84	95	

From South Carolina are reported 9: —

Child,	12	73	84	243	274
	26	75	95	250	

From Texas are reported 10: —

Child,	2	53	74	79	95
	7	73	75	84	278

From Virginia are reported 23: —

Child,	4	13	75	93	126	243
	7	53	76	95	141	274
	10	73	84	120	155	289
	12	74	85	125	201	

A complete table of 40 ballad survivals in these six Southern States,² showing both the total of different ballads and their occurrence by States, might be drawn up as follows.

¹ See note 1, p. 59.

² Satisfactory statistics for the rest of the South could not be obtained. No. 155 is reported in Child from Maryland; and Professor Kittredge now reports No. 84 from Mississippi. No. 95 was discovered by the writer in West Virginia in August, 1903, and reported by Professor Kittredge in this Journal, vol. xxi, p. 56. From Mississippi are reported by Professor Perrow Nos. 84 and 289.

show the numerical distribution of ballads by States or sections, and the number of variants, as well as to show the total number of different ballads. It is almost, if not quite, as important to know how widely a ballad is distributed as to know whether the ballad occurs at all. For example, No. 73 ("Lord Thomas and Fair Annet"), No. 75 ("Lord Lovel"), and No. 84 ("Bonny Barbara Allen") are found in many different variants in each of the Southern States included in this report. In Mr. Barry's list, No. 12 ("Lord Randal") comes first in popularity with 28 variants; No. 200 ("The Gypsy Laddie") next, with 17; then No. 4 ("Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight"), with 13; and, next, Nos. 2 ("The Elfin Knight") and 84 ("Barbara Allen"), with 8 variants each. These facts are as significant in the ballad tradition as the facts that No. 20 ("The Cruel Mother") occurs once only in the South (in Missouri), and that a fragment of No. 26 ("The Three Crows") has turned up in South Carolina alone of the Southern States.

A ballad syllabus or summary should be reported at least once a year, — at the annual meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society. This report might be published in the *Journal* in the first or second issue. So conducted, it would be of great interest and value to ballad-collectors throughout the United States. After its initial appearance, revision bringing it up to date would not be laborious.

III. THE BALLAD IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Up to the present, 9 different ballads in 24 variants have been discovered in South Carolina. These are —

Ballads (Child).	No. of Variants.
Lord Randal (12)	1
The Three Crows (26)	1
Lord Thomas and Fair Elinor (73) ¹	5
Lord Lovel (75)	2
Barbara Allen (84)	8
The Hangman's Tree (95)	2
James Harris (The House Carpenter) (243)	2
Henry Martyn (Andrew Martin) (250)	1
Our Goodman (fragment) (274)	2

It would, of course, be dangerous to begin to generalize on South Carolina ballad conditions so early and upon such incomplete returns. A few preliminary facts, however, may be safely noted.

"Lord Thomas and Fair Elinor" and "Barbara Allen" are easily the best known of the ballads in South Carolina. Of "Lord Thomas and Fair Elinor," 5 variants have turned up, running all the way from

¹ So-called "poor buckra" variants of Nos. 12 and 73 were reported by Mrs. C. S. Means in 1899. See "A Singular Literary Survival," *The Outlook*, vol. lxiii, pp. 119-122.

a fragment to an unusually pure and complete text of 20 stanzas. Tunes were sent in with three versions. "Barbara Allen" is the most widely distributed of all, both numerically and geographically. There have been secured 8 variants, representing practically every section of the State. The variants run from 5 up to 10 stanzas. They all resemble most nearly the B version in Child, the version given also in "Percy's Reliques." Of the 8 South Carolina variants, 5 close with the twining of the rose and the brier from the bodies of Barbara and her sweetheart "for all true lovers to admire."

Of the other ballads no special mention need be made here, except of one, — a negro variant of No. 95 ("The Maid freed from the Gallows"), under the usual American title, "The Hangman's Tree." This text was sent in by Mr. W. R. Dehon of Summerville, S.C., who stated that he had learned it from an old colored nurse, Margaret, who had belonged to the family in Charleston before the war. This variant is additionally interesting because it makes mention of a golden ball which is needed to free the maid from the gallows. This allies it with the H version in Child. In his note on this version, Child remarks, "A characteristic explanation is furnished of the heroine's danger: she has lost a golden key, or a golden ball, which had been intrusted to her."

The first triad of verses, which in ballads of this type fixes the framework, runs: —

Hangman, hangman, hold your hand
A little longer still:
I think I see my father coming
And he will set me free.

O father, father, have you brought
My golden ball and come to set me free?
Or have you come to see me hung
Upon the Scarlet Tree?

I have not brought your golden ball
Or come to set you free;
But I have come to see you hung
Upon the Scarlet Tree.

So on through the whole family, until the sweetheart comes. He brings the golden ball, and frees the maid.

This South Carolina group bears out perfectly two of the conclusions reached by Professor Belden in his article on "Balladry in America."¹ First, themes repulsive to our moral sensibilities are dropped. In No. 26, "The Three Ravens" ("The Three Crows"), for example, stanza six, which might be a little embarrassing to us now, does not

¹ See this *Journal*, vol. xxv, pp. 5-6.

appear. This tendency is due in part, of course, to the supersensitive refinement of the present age; but it is also due in part to the fact that ballads are frequently sung to children as nursery songs. Either reason is sufficient to account for the softening and toning-down of earlier ballad themes and situations.

The second conclusion of Professor Belden, borne out by the South Carolina group, is, that ballads which in their British forms present more or less distinctively supernatural elements, lose these elements in America. For example, in both versions of No. 243, it is simply the returned lover, not his ghost or demon, that tempts the house carpenter's wife away to be drowned at sea when the ship springs a leak.

Valid also seems the generally held opinion, that ballads are preserved by the music; that is, they are really and truly songs, not narrative poems. In nearly every case, the person sending in a South Carolina ballad has reported it as being sung rather than recited. In general, the words and the music are recollected together from childhood, learned in the nursery from nurse, mother, or grandmother.

The promising feature of balladry in South Carolina is, that the field is still largely untilled. The surface of the ground has been barely scratched. What is true of the ballad is true of all the other departments of folk-lore as well, — folk-tale, animal and plant lore, superstitions, witchcraft, customs, games, bird and beast lore, formulas, phrases, animal cries and calls, and popular etymology. The store of material is rich, varied, and abundant.

By this time next year we hope that at least 20 different traditional ballads will have been secured in South Carolina. Twenty seems a fair working-limit so far for any one Southern State. Missouri and Kentucky are the two States which have been worked most thoroughly up to the present, which is due largely to the efforts of the folk-lore groups headed by Professor H. M. Belden in Missouri and by Professor H. G. Shearin in Kentucky. Missouri, as noted, reports 19 ballads. Professor Shearin's excellent "*Syllabus of Kentucky Folk Songs*"¹ contains 22 traditional ballads,² including a doubtful identification or so. In answer to a recent request for later information, Professor Shearin writes that no additional ballads have come to light since the *Syllabus* was published, adding, "I am forced to believe that almost all of them in this section have been discovered. At a meeting, day before yesterday [Dec. 6, 1913], of our State Folk-Lore Society, I find this to be the consensus of opinion of the group of workers present."

Of the Southern States, Virginia has recently come to the front most rapidly in collecting ballads. The Virginia Society is only about a year

¹ *Transylvania University Studies in English*, Lexington, 1911.

² Professor Kittredge's report of No. 85 brings Kentucky's total up to 23.

old, but it has already done and is doing splendid work. From Virginia are reported 23 different ballads in more than 30 variants. Four of the Virginia ballads have not been reported by any other State. These are —

- 120, "Robin Hood's Death."
- 126, "Robin Hood and the Tanner."
- 141, "Robin Hood Rescuing Will Stutley."
- 201, "Bessie Bell and Mary Gray."

One other Robin Hood ballad (No. 125, "Robin Hood and Little John") was reported¹ by Dr. H. S. V. Jones from Illinois; but his informant learned it in Virginia.

The rich ballad discoveries already made in Missouri and Kentucky, and now being made in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, should be duplicated and increased in all the South Atlantic States. The folk-lore movement seems to be taking on new life in the South. The next few years should show gratifying results. The societies in Virginia and North Carolina are but a year old. Ours in South Carolina is a vigorous youngster of a few months. The Georgia society is scheduled for formal organization, Easter, 1914. Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana are yet to be heard from.

Most significant of all, so far as the ballad is concerned, is a bulletin just issued by the Bureau of Education in Washington. It was prepared by Professor C. Alphonso Smith of the University of Virginia, president of the Virginia Folk-Lore Society.² The bulletin sets forth a comprehensive plan for collecting ballads throughout the United States. It is addressed to the public school teachers of the nation. It opens with a request for co-operation on the part of teachers, pupils, and patrons in sending in ballad information. An alphabetical list of the 305 traditional ballads follows, with an explanation of their interest and importance. Forty thousand copies are to be issued. Mr. P. P. Claxton, National Commissioner of Education, has written a ringing introduction, thus giving his own influence and the prestige of the Bureau of Education to the movement.

All in all, it seems that the South is on the eve of contributing a highly important and significant chapter to the history of balladry in America.

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¹ See this *Journal*, vol. xxiii, pp. 432-434.

² Professor Smith writes that he is already receiving hundreds of letters from all over the country about ballads. He is preparing a work on ballads in Virginia.